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BY ISAAC PENINGTON,

AN EMINENT MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL IN THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS,

WHICH HE JOINED ABOUT THE YEAR 1658.

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LET those read this little piece, who, like the Author of it, have had long to mourn over their own corruptions, or have been perplexed and entangled by the various, subtle, and unscriptural views afloat, on the subject of Election and Reprobation. It enters not diffusely or elaborately into these matters; but its salutary tendency is, to turn people's minds over unto God, his gift, his calling, his working, and to turn them away from that which always severed from him, even darkness, deceit, disobedience, and death.

IT hath pleased the Lord, who is over all and good unto all, to provide a remedy for the sin and transgression of the creature. For, as sin hath abounded unto death, so he hath caused righteousness to abound unto life; yea, the free gift, which is as large and universal as ever sin was, hath more power in it to save, than sin hath to destroy. And there is no ground of discouragement for any, in reference to God, who hath not outsinned the day of their visitation, and so the

offer of mercy is over as to them; though the enemy of the soul strives to raise up many discouragements and objections in the minds of many, to keep them from hoping in the Lord, and from giving up to his truth, which saveth all that receive it and abide in it. Now, it is in my heart at this time, from a true sense, to signify somewhat concerning the nature of the Lord, and his real desire to save even those that perish, which may conduce towards the removing of objections and lets of this nature out of the minds of men.

1. God is sweetness, meekness, gentleness, tenderness, abounding in mercy and loving-kindness, pitying the miserable, and naturally holding forth an helping hand towards them: yea, he is universally thus. There is not one miserable soul, not one perishing creature upon the face of the earth, but as he hath wisdom and power to help it, so he hath tender bowels, and an heart thereunto. And it is not for want of somewhat to be done on his part, that souls perish, but the failing always was, and still is, on the creature's part.

2. God loveth all his creatures, and cannot but be good to them. He is outwardly good, he is inwardly good to them all. He can do nothing against any one of them, but what stands with his love and mercy. He doth not forget himself; he doth not lose his nature in the manifesting of his righteousness, wrath, and severity against sin and sinners.

3. He desires not the death of a sinner, nay, not of the wicked. How mercifully did he walk with the Jews in the first covenant? Did he ever desire their miscarriages, and the miseries which *came upon* them thereby? Nay, did he not desire

their good, and their obedient walking with him therein for their good? "O! (said he) that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep my commandments always, that it might be well with them," &c. Deut. v. 29. How mercifully doth he walk with all in the second covenant, that are in any measure drawn within the limits and compass thereof! He is a Saviour, that is his nature; and he seeketh the salvation of his creatures with his whole heart, and with all his soul. And when he bringeth any to repentance, there is joy in his bosom: and when the enemy breaketh in upon any of his, or by any subtlety draweth them into that which destroyeth, his pure tender Spirit is grieved therewith, and mourneth because of it. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," said his true living image, with tears, "how often would I have gathered thee!"

4. He would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth. God sends his truth, his powerful truth, to save; and he shuts not any one out of it; but seeks, in the way he hath appointed, to gather all into it, that they might be saved by it.

5. He is very patient and long-suffering, waits long, tries long, invites often, touches often, draws often; yea, the very vessels of wrath fitted to destruction, there is much patience and long-suffering exercised towards them, before the Lord can cast them off, and give them up utterly to destruction. For mark, destruction is not his work or delight; it is the work of a spirit and nature contrary to his. "I came not," saith Christ, "to destroy men's lives, but to save;" to give life to them. And this is the *proper end* of God in every administration:

his end is not death, destruction, increasing of the condemnation of the creature, &c. but to bring it to life thereby, out of that which leadeth into the condemnation and destruction. Did he not for this end bear with the old world? Was not this the end of Noah's preaching to them, and warning of them? Did he not for this end bear with the Jews in Egypt, in the wilderness, in Canaan, &c.? Is not this the proper intent of the goodness, forbearance, and long-suffering of God, that it should lead to repentance? (Rom. ii. 4.) and repentance leads to mercy, remission, and life.

6. The sacrifice of Christ had relation to all men. He was sent out of God's universal love to mankind, to the whole world; and was made a propitiation by God for the sins of the whole world.

7. There is no man perisheth for want of power; for there is power in the free gift which comes upon all. There is a power in it to quicken, to give faith, to preserve in the faith, to do all that is to be done in the soul; and it doth all everywhere, as it findeth place and entertainment in the soul. But man refuseth, man loveth the darkness, hateth the light, shutteth his eyes against it, withdraweth his heart from it, and so beateth back the purpose and counsel of God's love and good-will towards him. For, as the Jews outwardly, in that outward covenant, almost always rebelled, resisted, and brought wrath upon themselves, to the grief of God's heart and of his holy prophets; so do men in reference to the inward covenant, (in that nature and spirit,) exceedingly provoking the Lord, until his Spirit, in its holy jealousy and indignation, turn from them, and give them up to hard-

ness, senselessness, and impenitency, which sealeth up to destruction. But as Israel, in that first covenant, could never justly lay the cause of their destruction on God, but God did most justly lay it on them, "O Israel! thy destruction is of thyself, but in me is thy help;" so, neither can any blame the Lord, who perish from and fall short of the virtue of the second covenant; for he faileth not in doing his part therein, no more than he did fail in the first. But, man turneth from the power which saves, from the light which makes manifest, from the life which quickens; and this is his condemnation, and the cause of his perishing: so that, God will be just and clear of the blood of all men, and the blood of them that perish will lie upon their own heads. Had there not been somewhat near every man, which had more power in it than sin had, they might have had some plea before the Lord; but the presence of this, the power of this, the working of this in every heart, more or less, leaves all men without excuse, and clears the free-giver, and his free gift in the balance of righteousness. For, this gift of his is faithful to every man upon the face of the earth, never consenting to his iniquities and transgressions in any kind, but still testifying against them, as the Lord pleaseth to open its mouth. But, who hath believed its report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? Yet, greater will the condemnation be upon them, upon whom the Lord hath more abundantly shined; and many will have a plea in respect of them, which the Lord will hear and consider, and so they shall not enter into that depth of judgment and condemnation, which will light on such as have resisted the light and power

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Therefore, O all men upon the earth, know the day of your visitation! Make peace with the Lord, O transgressors! lay hold on his strength, that ye may make peace with him. Believe not the liar, who would put you out of hope, but believe the voice of his love and tender Spirit. Turn in, listen after him, watch if he do not call, mind if he do not draw; and do not say, I want power; but wait in humility, meekness, and fear, until his power arise. Bear his judgments, wait upon him in the way of his judgments. Do not fly from him because thereof; for therein is the mercy, life, and salvation. Be not hasty, but wait long, believe long, hope long, feel the patience of the Lamb, learn the mysterious path of life from the inward teacher, that ye may certainly know it, and find your feet guided by his Spirit into it.

Is not the voice gone forth from him that is true? "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, &c. and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." And is not he near who causeth the thirst, and giveth the will? Whom hath the Lord excluded? Why should any man exclude himself? The call is universal, the way is set open to all. That is at hand, which hath life and power in it, and is ready to work in all. This commandment hath it received of its Father; and it is faithful, which hath received it: and all that come to the Father here, in this gathering of life, the Father is ready to receive. Thy soul, O

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THE END.

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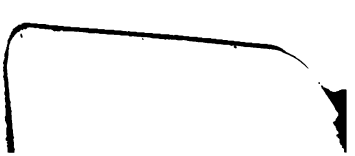

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